Crisscrossing the country during our vacations, we realized that isolationism was a natural product of the nation's geographic and economic conditions and its history. It had never been attacked since the War of 1812, and had so much wealth within its borders that only experts could see its economic limitations in the event of a war or a blockade. An average American had pacifism and anti-militarism in his bones; military preparations and alliances were incompatible with his passionate desire for peace; his isolationism was deeply emotional. Moreover, political thinking beyond debates in Congress and state legislatures or national and local elections was contrary to American custom. People had not been taught to discuss politics in terms of national aims in coming decades and even less to visualize them against the background of world history. American isolationism, nurtured during more than a century of sheltered living, could be dissipated, in Toynbee's language, only by a violent shock as a response to a challange, or, in Roosevelt's words, at the time of the nation's rendezvous with destiny.

AMERICA AT WAR

The President's quarantine speech in Chicago met with public disapproval. Was not F.D.R. luring the nation into a military alliance and, eventually, a war far from American shores—a direct violation of the century-old tradition of American foreign policy?

With Munich, the war came nearer. More people began to think something had to be done to stop Hitler. After the Hitler-Stalin pact, the war became unavoidable. People in the United States began to realize that Hitler was a threat to the entire world, including America. Great Britain seemed to be the next victim.

When the British King and Queen came to Washington and Hyde Park, the President displayed his showmanship at its best, trying to kindle friendly feelings for the Commonwealth. He received the royal couple like young friends—not quite in distress, but in a rather difficult situation—with sympathy and respect for their courage in the face of adverse fortune. Perhaps there was a shade of patronizing informality in his attitude. The newspapers reported that the President said to the King, "Call me Franklin, I shall call you George." "Yes, Mr. President." It seemed to me that the people in the streets of Washington began to love the royal guests just because of the dignity and courtesy with which the President entertained them.

Then came the war. The Communists denounced British, French, and American imperialists and warmongers. The liberals in Washington were bewildered. Confusion increased after the invasion of Poland